



Puyallup Tribe of Indians
Revised Water Quality Standards



FACT SHEET No. 1:

Change from Class-Based to Use-Based Designations

The Tribal water quality standards provide a mechanism for managing and regulating the quality and use of the Puyallup Tribe of Indians' waters by establishing the water quality goals for specific water bodies, and providing a legal basis for regulatory controls. The standards are also designed to establish the uses for which the surface waters of the Tribe shall be protected. The Tribal standards were first approved in 1994, and have just undergone their first triennial review.

What Are The Changes?

The most extensive change to the Tribal water quality standards is the switch from a class-based designation system for surface waters to a use-based system, similar to the recent changes to the State of Washington's water quality standards.

The original Tribal standards assigned designated uses to surface waters by using a "class-based" system. Under this classification system, all surface waters were assigned to one of five classes (Class AA, A, B, C, or Lake Class), with each class having a predetermined set of designated uses and associated water quality criteria. The water quality criteria were set to protect all designated uses within a particular class. Within this classification scheme, Class AA waters were considered the highest quality waters, and Class C the lowest. Classes AA, A, and Lake Class included the widest range of designated uses (public water supplies, propagation of fish and wildlife, recreation, agricultural and industrial purposes, and navigation, as well as ceremonial and religious waters uses). Class B waters were not designated as public water supplies or for ceremonial or religious uses, and included only secondary contact (and not primary contact) recreation. Class C waters did not include public or agricultural water supply uses or ceremonial or religious uses, and included only secondary contact recreation and limited aquatic life uses.



The revised Tribal standards switch use designations for waterbodies to a "use-based" system. Rather than assigning waters to classes with predetermined sets of uses, a use-based system assigns individual uses to waterbodies independently of each other. This system allows the Tribe to designate additional uses for individual waterbodies without having to develop new classes, and to protect waters for a high quality aquatic life use (e.g. salmonid spawning) without also requiring protection for high quality recreational use and domestic water supply.

The new system establishes separate uses for marine waters, fresh waters, and estuarine waters to more appropriately assign attainable uses to all waters. (Fact Sheet No. 2 describes these new designated uses.)

Since most waters of the Reservation were considered Class A waters under the original standards, all Class A designated uses will still apply to those waters under a use-based system, unless a "Use Attainability Analysis" is performed. For this reason, the designated uses for most waters will be virtually identical under a use-based system or a class-based system. The major difference is that additional uses can now be added on a waterbody-specific basis, and any future modifications (additions or deletions) can also occur on a waterbody-specific basis. More discussion is provided in Fact Sheet No. 2, Changes to Uses.

Implications

The change from a class-based designation system to a use-based system is not expected to result in any negative impacts because all the existing uses will be maintained and protected. There are specific requirements in the federal water quality regulations regarding the assignment and removal of designated uses that must be followed (40 CFR 131.10). Once designated uses have been assigned to a waterbody, they can only be removed under certain conditions, and only by following specific protocols (i.e., a “Use Attainability Analysis”) contained in the regulations.

What Does This Mean for...

Human Health? The new use-based designations will allow the assignment of new uses (and associated criteria) that will be more protective of human health. For example, one such new use is “Cultural and Subsistence Fish Consumption.”

Environment Health? The new use-based designations will allow the assignment of new uses (and associated criteria) that will be more protective of environmental health. For example, one such new use is “Conservancy.”

Endangered Species? All the existing uses will be maintained and protected. In addition, the new use-based designations will allow the assignment of new uses (and associated criteria) that will be beneficial to certain special-status species, particularly salmonid (salmon and trout) species. There are two federal threatened salmonid species occurring in the potentially affected area (chinook salmon and bull trout), and one federal candidate species (coho salmon). For example, such new uses include “Salmonid Spawning,” “Salmonid Rearing”, Native Char (bull trout) Rearing, etc.



Existing and New Discharge (NPDES) Permits? The change from class-based to use-based designation is not expected to result in any impacts to existing NPDES permits because all the existing uses will be maintained and protected. In conjunction with the revised antidegradation policy (see Fact Sheet No. 4), the change may result in small beneficial impacts associated with future NPDES permits because it will allow the assignment of new uses (and associated criteria) which will allow the Tribe some flexibility for allowing discharges that help to restore or enhance water quality or existing or beneficial uses. For example, one such new use is “Aquaculture.”

The new uses are discussed in more detail in Fact Sheet No. 2. Updates to numeric and narrative criteria are discussed in Fact Sheet No. 3; Fact Sheet No. 4 summarizes updates to the antidegradation policy; and Fact Sheet No. 5 presents changes to discretionary policies.

If you have any questions regarding the revised Tribal water quality criteria, please contact:

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